

Section 3: Stream health in the Maryland Coastal Bays

General Introduction

The health of the bays is largely influenced by activities that occur within the watershed (area of land that drains into the bays). Nutrients, sediments and chemicals are transported to the bays via surface runoff (water running over land to creeks, rivers, and streams) and groundwater (water that flows below the earth's surface). Though the latter is the major source of freshwater nutrient input, the relative condition of streams and creeks flowing into the bays is no less relevant to the overall health of the Coastal Bays. In addition, extensive ditching in the watershed for increased drainage has resulted in far more linear feet of waterway than present historically. However, many of these manmade waterways are low quality habitat, built where no natural streams were present in the past. Freshwater streams were monitored for nutrient concentrations and for the condition of living resources (fish and benthic organisms). Many programs, both state and federal, assess stream condition in the Coastal Bays. The chapters in this section summarize the results of some of these studies.

Stream Health Monitoring Objective: To characterize the status and trends of streams in the Coastal Bays.

Chapter 3.1 Stream Nitrate in the Maryland Coastal Bays watershed

Chapter 3.2 Maryland Biological Stream Survey results for the Coastal Bays watershed

Chapter 3.3 Condition of benthic macroinvertebrate communities in the Maryland Coastal Bays watershed